



## RSO SECURITY BULLETIN

December 22, 2010

### UNITED STATES EMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO

#### SUBJECT: SECURITY TIPS FOR THE HOLIDAY SEASON

#### RSO SUGGESTIONS

As we enter the **HOLIDAY** season, the Regional Security Office would like to recommend the following security measures:

**Tip # 1:** Pickpockets operate most successfully in crowds. If you are carrying a purse or small bag, we suggest that the item be tucked under your arm and close to the body. Keep at least one hand over the clasp.

**Tip # 2:** Stay alert and **BE AWARE OF YOUR SURROUNDINGS**. Use your third sense.

**Tip # 3:** If you are carrying a wallet, you may want to consider keeping it in a front pocket or in a concealable money belt. In crowds, consider covering your wallet with your hand.

**Tip # 4:** Do not count your money while walking or shopping.

**Tip # 5:** It is good practice to keep some money separate from your wallet. Also consider only carrying the identification, money and credit cards you will actually need. Always maintain a photo-copy of your credit cards and identification in a safe location.

**Tip # 6:** If someone suspicious is following you, walk into the nearest store or restaurant and ask for assistance.

**Tip # 7:** Never leave your car unlocked or any packages, belongings or luggage in plain view.

**Tip # 8:** If you use ATMs, ask your friends to watch your back or at least be aware of someone trying to look over your shoulder (shoulder surfing).

**Tip # 9:** If possible, avoid traveling or shopping alone. Safety is usually in numbers.

**Tip # 10:** If you are out enjoying the holiday festivities, consider calling a taxi to pick you up and take you home.

#### **AT LEAST ONE DAY BEFORE YOU LEAVE ON VACATION**

**Tip # 11:** Arrange with a neighbor or a colleague to pick up and hold your mail and newspapers so they do not pile up. If this is not possible, contact your post office and news carrier to discontinue these deliveries.

**Tip # 12:** Make arrangements to have someone check daily to remove throwaway papers and circulars from your doorway and yard.

**Tip # 13:** If you have valuables in the house, take them to your bank for storage in a safety deposit box. Deposit your extra cash in your bank account.

**Tip # 14:** Make sure any broken windows, door locks or window locks are repaired.

**Tip # 15:** Notify your section supervisor, Management and the RSO about your departure / return dates,

and give a name and telephone number of a neighbor or relative or colleague to notify in case of a burglary, fire or other emergency.

**Tip # 16:** Arrange for neighbors or colleagues to watch your house and give them a key. Let them know where and how you can be reached in an emergency. Write their telephone number down so you can check with them during your trip. Give them your car description and license number.

**Tip # 17:** Move all ladders, tools, lawn equipment, garbage cans and yard furniture to your garage, basement or storage shed.

### **ON THE DAY YOU DEPART**

**Tip # 18:** Unplug all electrical appliances such as radios, television sets, irons, washers, and fans to prevent possible damage from electrical storms.

**Tip # 19:** Set your thermostat so that your furnace will maintain a reasonable temperature and make sure that during the winter that your outdoor water taps are drained to prevent freezing.

**Tip # 20:** Make sure all gas appliances are in good order and that the pilot lights are working.

**Tip # 21:** Turn down the volume control on the bottom of your telephone and answering machine so it cannot be heard from outside.

**Tip # 22:** Close and lock all windows and sliding doors. Make sure that a charley bar is secure on sliding doors and that all screens or storm windows are locked or fastened.

**Tip # 23:** If you have metal window shades to secure your windows, use them to prevent someone from gaining easy access through your windows.

**Tip # 24:** If you are leaving a car or other vehicle in your driveway, make sure it is locked.

**Tip # 25:** Set your electrical timer to turn some lights on and off during the evening hours.

**Tip # 26:** Make sure the last person out locks the door. Take a walk around the house, and check the doors and windows.

**Tip # 27:** If you have not already done so, leave your key with a neighbor or colleague. Check to make sure you have their telephone number.

**Tip # 28:** Take the time to review the global security news and reports on [www.osac.gov](http://www.osac.gov) or the travel advisories on [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov).

**Tip # 29:** Remember to set and activate your alarm.

### **PERSONAL SECURITY SELF-ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST**

#### **Daily Security Habits and Practices**

- Do you vary your times and routes to and from work?
- While driving, do you keep your car doors locked and windows closed?
- Do you check the interior and exterior of your vehicle prior to getting into your vehicle? Look for things that are irregular or abnormal.
- Do you maintain a low personal profile by not doing anything that draws attention to yourself?
- Are you alert to what is going on around you?
- Are your colleagues and family aware of your daily plans and do they know how to reach you?
- Schedules that are the most predictable leave you the most vulnerable. Be unpredictable when possible in both your work and social schedules.
- Always be aware of your surroundings. Report all suspicious activity to your RSO.

- Ensure all of your family members are briefed on security measures.

### **PERSONAL SECURITY WHILE TRAVELING**

- Notify someone of your travel plans.
- Remember that when traveling -- you are more vulnerable to attack. Take special care and remain aware of your surroundings *at all times*. Don't drink to the point of intoxication – especially where you would not be able to defend yourself or not be aware of your surroundings.
- Use special clothing or accessories to hide your passport, money or credit cards. Keep the majority of your funds in traveler's checks and hidden. For your visitors it is recommended that they obtain an official copy of their passport to carry and keep the original in your home/office. The use of a money clip is recommended. If you are robbed, you may lose the money in the clip but will retain important credit cards and documents (make copies/store them).
- Consider the use of a fanny or waist pack, worn with the pack in front. These are much safer than carrying a handbag and are more difficult for pickpockets to steal from. If you are wearing a backpack, consider wearing this with the pack in front also.
- Be cognizant of local customs, laws, and regulations.
- Obtain and carry with you the telephone numbers of the local police and the nearest U.S. Mission. For your guests, pass on the phone numbers for yourself and/or the Marines. If you have a cell phone that you don't use a lot, perhaps they can carry it for the time that they are here for use in case of emergency.

### **CARJACKING PREVENTION TIPS**

- Be aware. When you are out in public, be aware of your surroundings.
- When driving in potentially risky area, don't allow yourself to be pinned in. Always leave enough space to pull away quickly.
- Don't be distracted by talking on the cell phone, eating, etc. Losing your focus on the road and/or your surroundings could make you an easy target.
- Keep your vehicle locked at all times and windows closed.
- When approaching your parked car, have your car keys in hand. Check the surrounding area for suspicious persons near your car or following you. If you see a suspicious person, do not attempt to get into your car but quickly walk to the nearest public place and call for help.
- Don't make yourself an even more attractive target by leaving your purse or other valuables in plain view.
- Avoid parking in unsecured areas and places that will be unlit at night.
- Always be prepared to take evasive actions. Play the "what if game" and think of what evasive action you would take if a person next to you suddenly brandished a gun.
- Be alert for motorcycles or bicycles stopping next to your car, especially if there are two riders.
- Always keep your car well maintained and make sure you have plenty of gas. You don't want to become stranded in a dark, unfamiliar or questionable area.
- If you are forced to pull over due to mechanical problems, be wary of people who stop and offer help.
- Keep your house keys on a separate ring from your car keys.
- Never roll down your window to answer questions. This could be a pretext for a gunman to take your vehicle.
- The most important rule is; if a gunman wants your vehicle, give it up.

### **PERSONAL SECURITY WHILE SHOPPING**

- Stay alert and be aware of what's going on around you.
- Park in well-lighted space, as close to the store entrance as possible and away from dumpsters, bushes, or large vehicles. Be sure to lock your doors, close the windows, and hide shopping bags and gifts in the trunk. If shopping near your home, consider returning home to drop off gifts. They'll be safer there than in your car.
- Never leave your car unoccupied with the motor running or with children inside. A car can be stolen in seconds.
- Avoid carrying large amounts of cash; pay with a credit card whenever possible (but make sure you watch the person handling your credit card. Don't let them walk away with your card and make sure they only swipe it once in front of you). Keep a record of all your credit and debit card numbers in a safe place at home so you can report lost or stolen cards by their numbers.
- Carry your keys, cash, and credit cards separate from each other.
- Remember exactly where you parked your car. Make a mental note or write it down so you will know.
- If you need to use an ATM, use one inside the mall or some other well-lit, populated area.
- Be aware of your surroundings as you come and go from your car. Have your keys out and in your hand so you don't have to fumble to find them in the parking lot. Don't be shy about asking mall or store security personnel for an escort.
- Shopping with children? Teach them to go to a store clerk or security guard if you get separated. Also, have a family "code word" in case you get separated. This word can be given to security staff so that your child can discern friend from foe.

#### **IF YOU ARE A VICTIM**

- Don't resist. Comply with the criminal's demands. Don't be a hero, your family wants you home.
- Be a good witness. Record a suspect's description, license plate number, vehicle info, etc.
- Contact the RSO and/or local police immediately.
- As always, if you or a family member has any security related questions and/or concerns, please contact the Regional Security Office.